

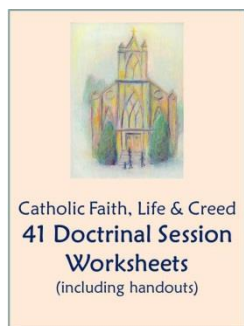


Catholic Faith, Life & Creed  
**Breaking Open the  
Word Worksheets**  
for each week of the year  
(choose cycle A, B, or C)

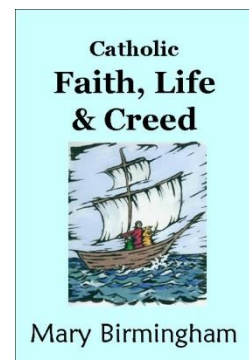
How to use **Breaking  
Open the Word** with  
small groups for:

Youth ministry  
Confirmation programs  
Adult formation  
RCIA  
Household enrichment

This step-by-step process will demonstrate how to use this resource effectively for various groups within your parish. Leaders should consult this guide (which is set up for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C) in order to follow their way through the worksheets. Each week is similar to this.



If you are also using the Doctrinal Session worksheets from **Catholic Faith, Life, & Creed**, you will note that each Breaking Open the Word worksheet leads you to specific doctrinal options. A connecting statement between the liturgy of that Sunday and the doctrinal topic is also provided.



If you are not using the Doctrinal Session worksheets, then this guide is all you will need. We advise you to keep the process rather simple and allow the maximum time for sharing among members of your group.



## Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

A Complete Catechesis for Christian Living

Breaking Open the Word  
Mary Birmingham

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time | Year C



Marriage Feast of Cana Gospel, Surikhat, Crimea, 1332, artist Grigor Sukiasantr  
(Brevan, [Matehadarian](#), MS 7664.)

1. Make sure everyone is settled comfortably before you begin.

2. Greet everyone warmly and with a large welcome.

3. If everyone knows each other, proceed as usual. If not, go around the circle asking everyone to introduce him or herself and give a little background.

4. Ask everyone to look at the picture on this page. Begin by “breaking open the picture” – simply ask: What do you see here? What message does this artist deliver to us?



#### Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Option 1. Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.  
Option 2.

Cod of My Life  
Only in love can I find you, my Cod.  
In love the gates of my soul spring open,  
allowing me to breathe a new air of freedom  
and forget my own petty self.  
In love my whole being streams forth  
out of the rigid confines of narrowness and anxious self-assertion,  
which makes me a prisoner of my own poverty and emptiness.  
In love all the powers of my soul flow out toward you,  
wanting never more to return,  
but to lose themselves completely in you,  
since by your love you are the inmost center of my heart,  
closer to me than I am to myself.  
But when I love you,  
when I manage to break out of the narrow circle of self  
and leave behind the restless agony of unanswered questions,  
when my blinded eyes no longer look merely from afar  
and from the outside upon your unapproachable brightness,  
and much more when you yourself, O Incomprehensible One,  
have become through love the inmost center of my life,  
then I can bury myself entirely in you, O mysterious Cod,  
and with myself all my questions.

Karl Rahner, SJ  
Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton at Church of our Lady of the Rosary.

Catholic  
Faith, Life  
& Creed

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Breaking Open the  
Word worksheets  
connect with Catholic  
Faith, Life, & Creed  
Doctrinal Sessions.

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5. When ready, formally begin the session with the Sign of the Cross.

6. Pray this prayer together.

If you have a customary way of praying at your meetings, you may substitute it for this.

### Liturgical Context

- ▶ Today begins the Sundays of Ordinary Time.
- ▶ At the beginning of the year we focus our attention on the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.
- ▶ Jesus performs his first public miracle and thus inaugurates his mission.
- ▶ At the end of the liturgical year the focus is on the culmination of his ministry.

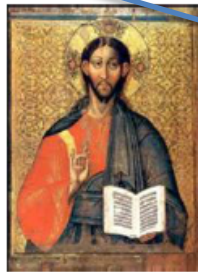
Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two, then surface insights in the wider group.

- ▶ What spoke to your heart in today's liturgy?
- ▶ What reading, symbol, music, homily, spoke to you and why did it speak to you?
- ▶ What touched you the most in today's Gospel?

If time is a consideration, omit reflection on one or both of the readings; simply make a statement about the reading such as:

### First Reading: Isaiah 62:1-5

- ▶ God celebrates the people's return from exile and the restoration of the covenant he shared with them.
- ▶ Today's reading celebrates the community's return from exile.
- ▶ There is great rejoicing. God is ecstatic over the return of his chosen ones.
- ▶ God rejoices like a lover would rejoice over the return of his spouse.
- ▶ God rejoices over the restoration of the people and the city.
- ▶ The city has not yet been rebuilt, but there is genuine confidence that in due time all will be restored.
- ▶ When a new name is given in Scripture it signals a change in direction.
- ▶ When God gave Israel a new name it signifies that it could no longer be the unfaithful harlot that it was. Israel must be true to the covenant.
- ▶ Israel was transformed from "Desolate" to "Espoused."
- ▶ God fully restored Israel to the intimate covenant they both shared.
- ▶ Today's reading expresses a common theme in the Old Testament.
- ▶ The entire Biblical corpus expresses God in covenant relationship with his people.
- ▶ Yet still the people sinned and God forgave them over and over again.



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### Mystagogy reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two, then surface brief insights in the wider group. If time allows catechist shares from his or her own life experience.

- ▶ In what way does this Scripture passage speak to your life at this time?
- ▶ God entered into a covenant with you as well as the Israelites. In what way have you lived up to that covenant and in what way have you fallen short?
- ▶ What does this reading teach us about God's relationship with us—*with you*?
- ▶ What does this reading teach us about God?

### Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12, 4-11

- ▶ Corinth was a diverse cultural center.
- ▶ Paul's community was subject to all sorts of pagan influences and philosophies.
- ▶ Paul challenged the community to embrace proper Christian behaviors and ideals.
- ▶ Paul was particularly frustrated by the behavior of a special group within the community called Gnostics who believed they possessed special knowledge that set them apart from others in the community. They considered themselves to be the elite of the community.
- ▶ The Gnostics insisted that they and they alone possessed special knowledge and special gifts. As far as they were concerned only those who possessed the gift of tongues qualified as the spiritual elite.
- ▶ When the assembly gathered they shouted out their utterances. The Gnostics condemned others who were not so gifted. They even condemned Paul.
- ▶ Such self-righteous attitudes can be seen today in our contemporary communities as well.
- ▶ Paul severely chastised the Gnostic members of his community reminding them that the source of all spiritual gifts is God—not the individual.
- ▶ Paul reminded them that spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit and are for the uplifting of the community, not the individual, thus they should refrain from ostentatious outbursts and arrogant, showy display of the God-given gifts.



### Mystagogy reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two, surface brief insights in wider group. If time allows catechist shares from his or her own life experience.

- ▶ Have you ever known anyone who lorded their religious gifts over your head or made you feel that their spirituality was far superior to yours? They perhaps might

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7. Read these faith statements aloud. Rotate readers with each bullet.

8. Now turn to this discussion. If you are Breaking Open the Word in the week *before* this Sunday, skip this sharing.

9. Note this comment on time. Gauge your time period and the material provided here and plan accordingly.

10. Now turn to the first reading for this Sunday. Begin by having someone proclaim this reading aloud. Then read these faith statements aloud, rotating readers with each statement. The process of reading these together is very important for your group. This movement around your circle begins a process of verbalizing which will help your group delve more deeply into their own hearing and sharing.

11. Turn now to this small group sharing, called Mystagogia by the church. If time allows, make sure everyone has the chance to speak. The important thing here is that everyone be given a chance to "tell his or her story."

12. Now turn to the second reading, using the same process as above.



say, "If only you would turn your life over to God the way I have, everything in your life would be better!" While there is no doubt truth in the statement that turning over one's life to God is a wonderful thing, what is the underlying message being conveyed in the statement?

- ▶ While it is possible that the aforementioned person is simply enthusiastic and not self-righteous (it is good to give the benefit of the doubt) what would be a better way to reach out to the intended person without conveying self-righteousness? What would you say?
- ▶ What is your experience of ecclesiology/church? What does it mean to you? Why is ecclesiology an important theology in our Church?
- ▶ What evidence is there in your life that you live the mandate of Paul's letter?
- ▶ What evidence is there in your life of the love Paul talks about?

#### Gospel: John 2: 1-11

Read or summarize the Gospel, perhaps provide a copy of the text for further reflection.

#### Gospel Exegesis

Please note: catechist may intersperse the questions at the end of the exegesis throughout your presentation where appropriate. Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions before presenting the exegesis.

- ▶ What specifically touched you in this Gospel?
- ▶ What does this Gospel mean to you?
- ▶ John relates his telling of the Good News so as to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ, Messiah, Son of the living God.
- ▶ The miracle stories in the Gospel of John seek to verify that Christ is the long awaited Messiah.
- ▶ His entire Gospel is written from the perspective of forming a community of disciples.
- ▶ By the time John wrote this Gospel, Christians had been expelled from the synagogue, de facto making them an illegal religion with no rights to exist according to Roman law.
- ▶ This put Christians in grave danger thus creating tremendous animosity between Jews and Christians.
- ▶ Messianic fervor was at a high pitch. Many people were wary of religious institutions and turned instead to follow a holy leader—a savior figure.
- ▶ People thus became initiated into the holy man, the divine person's group.
- ▶ People that were disillusioned with Jewish ritual and looking for new spiritual leadership easily saw in Jesus the Messiah they were seeking.
- ▶ Previous worship experiences were reinterpreted in light of their new discipleship in Christ.
- ▶ John's Gospel is the epitome of this trend in first century Palestine.
- ▶ Jesus is the divine man—the holy man who replaced Jewish ritual and worship.
- ▶ People were converted heart and soul to this Divine Man—Jesus the Christ.

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13. Likewise the small group sharing for this reading. Use the same process as above.

14. In many small groups, because of the amount of material that is available, they focus only on the Gospel reading for that Sunday.

You may also wish to read the faith statements for *each* reading, but only move into faith sharing or mystagogia for one of the readings, choosing the Gospel or another reading as you wish.

15. There is often quite a bit of material for the Gospel reading. We provide this

much material for small groups that wish to explore the readings in more depth. Feel free to shorten this if you wish. Read these faith statements aloud, rotating readers for each bullet.

- ▶ Jesus participated in Jewish worship to illustrate that he—his life and mission—superseeded Jewish ritual.
- ▶ The story at Cana reminds us of an important theme in John's Gospel: Jesus is not subject to human authority, but to God's will.
- ▶ Jesus' mother appears for the first time in the gospel. The last time she appears is at the foot of his cross.
- ▶ Jesus addresses her as "Woman" in both scenes.
- ▶ The title was akin to our modern word, Madam.
- ▶ Jesus' salutation of Mary as woman also hearkened to the woman of Genesis and Revelation. The woman in both texts engaged in cosmic battle with evil—Satan.
- ▶ John established Mary as the symbol of the Church.
- ▶ She was a sign and an icon of the Church who engages in battle with Satan over souls.
- ▶ Mary asked Jesus to ease an embarrassing situation at the wedding of friends.
- ▶ Jesus transcended the human dilemma of the situation and used the event to illustrate a spiritual truth and provide a glimpse of who he was.
- ▶ Jesus made the earthly wine to be at the service of eternal life.
- ▶ He reminded Mary that the wine he was bringing is wine of eternal life.
- ▶ Thus, his mother was not directing his actions—God was directing the miracle at hand.
- ▶ Jesus' first public miracle was at God's initiative.
- ▶ Jesus is clear—his ministry is guided by the will of God and no one else.
- ▶ Mary's command to the servant illustrates that she is well aware of just who her son was/is. It is an oblique expression of faith in his Sonship and his Messiahship.
- ▶ Jesus instructed that the water jars be filled to the brim with water.
- ▶ When Mary insisted that there was no wine—it was a metaphorical reference to the purification rites of Judaism.
- ▶ The jars were usually used in ritual purification rites. Each jar held about one hundred gallons of water. This would have been an amazingly opulent amount for a wedding event. Jesus was making an important theological statement. The new wine—the teaching of Jesus—fulfills the covenant that God had previously forged with Israel.
- ▶ Jesus used an embarrassing situation (saving the best wine to the end) to make his point. Jesus' sacramental action was the catalyst for the disciples to be converted to Christ as Lord and Messiah.
- ▶ The former rituals of Judaism were no longer needed. Jesus replaced them. Now the disciples could willingly leave the past behind and enter into a new covenant with Christ the Lord.
- ▶ Jesus formed a new community. He performed signs in their midst and showed them how he was the fulfillment of all that had been promised.
- ▶ The abundance of good wine symbolizes the joy that accompanies the arrival of kingdom of God—the last days, the end of the era as foretold by the prophets.

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16. This is a very important set of questions for faith sharing, but you may wish to choose one or two for your group. Or you may ask the members of your group to make that choice.

17. The final two pages of this resource (not

pictured) include a story appendix, used to help the leader think about what kind of stories best illustrate these readings; and the connecting statements to various doctrinal session options, used only if that is part of your program.



#### Mystagogia reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to ONE or MORE appropriate questions (as time allows) in small groups of four. Use the last three or four minutes to surface their insights in the wider group. Catechist responds by sharing his or her own experience. See appendix for an example. (8 Ten-twelve minutes)

- ▶ What is the primary message of this Gospel?
- ▶ What was John trying to accomplish in this wedding scene from Cana?
- ▶ What was Jesus' message to his mother?
- ▶ Why is his message Good News for us today?
- ▶ How do you feel about Jesus' miracles? What do they teach us today? Are we recipients of his miracles today? Explain.
- ▶ What was Jesus teaching his disciples about the rituals of Judaism? Why was this important for them to understand?
- ▶ Jesus' mother asked him to accomplish a miracle for their friends. Have you ever asked Jesus/Cod for a miracle for one of your friends? What was Jesus' response to his mother?
- ▶ What does his response teach us about miracles in general?
- ▶ What does this Gospel teach us about how God relates to us?
- ▶ What is the challenge of this gospel for Christian discipleship?
- ▶ Jesus was the fulfillment of all the prophets had foretold about the Messiah. Do you think you would have recognized Jesus as the Messiah if you were living at the time?
- ▶ Do you think you have the strength to be a prophet? What evidence is there in your life that you are willing and ready to embrace persecution and opposition for the sake of the gospel?

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